

Sitting by the pavement, the distant park lights cast a dim halo around them. A low hum of traffic murmurs in the background, but here, it's still. Quiet. Heavy. Noah takes a long drag from his cigarette, the ember flaring in the dark, before turning his gaze to Ava. His rant just tapered off—half nonsense, half truth.

Ava

That's a lot of words for "I'm spiraling." You just don't know how to be still.
You ever tried meditation?

Noah

(snorts)

Meditation? Please. You don't need to sit cross-legged to find inner peace.
You just need to orgasm.

Ava

(turns to him, frowning)

Excuse me?

Noah

It's the only time—maybe the only time—you let go.
No mask, no roles. Just... release.
For a second, your mind shuts up. You're not thinking. You're not even you.
You're just—gone.
Maybe that's the kind of quiet people are chasing with all this mindfulness crap.

Ava

(watching him, stiller now)

That's not peace. That's escape.

Noah

(shrugs, eyes forward)

Call it what you want.

Still beats breathing in and out pretending that's enough.

Ava blinks. Not sure whether to roll her eyes or agree.

Noah

(turning to her, voice lower)

Tell me I'm wrong.

He takes another puff—long, deliberate—then flicks the cigarette to the curb. It hisses out under his boot. Silence again, thicker now.

Ava watches him. A beat. Something about the light on his face. Or the honesty in his bullshit.

Ava

So that's your version of peace?
Just... sleep with your demons 'til they shut up?

Noah

(smirk creeping in)
Hey, I never said it was a long-term solution.
Just a decent pause.

He leans back on his palms, eyes skyward. She doesn't look away.

Ava

(quietly)
You ever think maybe what you really want is someone to be quiet with?

Noah

(glances at her, slower this time)
You offering?

Ava

(after a beat)
I said maybe.

*They sit in silence again—
but now, it hums.*